Examiners' Report
Lead Examiner Feedback

January 2022

Pearson BTEC Nationals in Children's Play, Learning and Development

Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice (31599H)

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What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, at Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark is for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:
http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html

Awarding BTEC qualifications in 2022

Ofqual has set out their plans for awarding qualifications in 2022 and intend to return to a normal, pre-pandemic, approach to grading standards over by 2023. They have confirmed that 2022 will be a transition year, to reflect that we are in a pandemic recovery period and students' education has been disrupted.

Our guiding principle and approach to awarding BTEC qualification results in 2022 will be to ensure parity in relation to the approach being taken for GCSE and A level learners. BTEC courses have a different structure and design to academic qualifications - BTECs are modular qualifications (with assessments taking place throughout the course) compared to GCSEs and A levels which are linear (assessed and awarded at the same time at the end of the year), and therefore our approach needs to be different.

In 2022 we will return to the usual method of calculating BTEC qualification results, however adaptations including, U-TAGs and reduced internal assessment, are in place to provide a comprehensive package of support for students.

The basis of our awarding approach to BTECs this year is to ensure it is as fair as possible for all learners. We will use a range of evidence to set grade boundaries for the external units. Part of this evidence will be to closely monitor learner performance in all assessments that contribute to learners' final qualification grade, to ensure parity with A level and GCSEs.

Further information can be found on our website and via our Social Media channels.

31599H : Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice

Grade	Unclassified	Level 3			
		N	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	8	17	31	45

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Introduction

The paper has been running for a number of assessment periods and it was clear that some learners were well prepared for the assessment, in particular for Questions 1 and 4 which follow a similar strategy throughout the series. Some learners are not fully prepared for the paper and as a result are not always able to demonstrate an understanding of essential content from the specification and apply this within their responses.

The question paper follows the format identified in the sample assessment materials. The paper is split into four activities. Each activity requires learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of different aspects of research. This includes research methods, their advantages and disadvantages, the implications of the research for individuals, early years' settings and the wider society. Marks for each activity are allocated in accordance with the specification design.

Each of the questions has been marked using a 'levels based' approach to assessment where the overall quality of the response is considered rather than the specific number of facts stated from the indicative content, although this does have a bearing on the quality of the response. More detail can be found below in the individual question section of the report.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

Learner performance varied throughout the paper. Learners need to show knowledge and understanding of research methods used to investigate early years' provision and practice. They need to understand and be able to discuss the opportunities for and the implications of applying research-based practice to early years' provision in a range of settings. There are opportunities for learners to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their understanding within their responses.

- Activity 1 requires learners to review the source material from part A (an article from the London Early Years Foundation) regarding men working in early years settings. The article contains information about a study completed by the LEYF which

looked at the benefits and impact of having male members of staff working in their nursery chain. It included findings that discussed a range of issues including research into the numbers of males in early years role and quotations from children, managers and parents, informed by focus groups. Learners are asked to comment on the research methods used (interviews, focus groups, collaborative narratives) and to compare this with the methods used in research that they have sourced themselves. Marks are available for work related to both sources, with additional credit being awarded for learners able to provide comparisons and conclusions.

- Activity 2 requires learners to develop their ideas, with specific reference to the issues and conclusions raised within the Part A material and those presented in the sources they have found themselves. Learners then make comparisons about whether children chose an adult to work with them in an activity based on the gender of the adult or their particular skill set in relation to the activity.

- Activity 3 is related to reflective practice. It requires learners to review and discuss the implications of impact of the gender early years' staff and the impact of these early years' settings and practice. The response should include reference to the article and other research they have reviewed in relation to men working in childcare settings.

- Activity 4 focuses on the research techniques needed to investigate how early years settings allocate men working in the setting to different activities, and whether these are linked to gender. Learners are required to critique a research proposal for the investigation based on a group of 20 nurseries in a chain, making suggestions which would improve the quality of the research where necessary.

Learners were able to show application of their knowledge with respect to each of the 4 Activities were able to access the higher mark bands. Where learners had applied their knowledge they were able to access marks in the higher mark bands, although those demonstrating a more basic level of knowledge, with little application, were not able to do this.

Responses overall varied, with some learners able to address the paper effectively whilst others were clearly not so well prepared. Some learners were able to demonstrate an understanding of research practices and offer realistic critiques of these as well as making suggestions for the implication of the research findings that they looked at for early years provision and practice.

Using the SAM materials during centers' preparation for this paper will allow learners the opportunity to practice how to structure and present their responses to access the marks available This should include opportunities to discuss the benefits of reflective practice, apply and analyse information and make recommendations for future practice.

Group work and discussion would provide a stimulating way for them to apply research knowledge and terms, whilst working collaboratively in teams to make recommendations for future practice. This can provide an opportunity to help learners to take control of the assessment as 'researchers'. Referring to the mark scheme during the activities will familiarise them as to the level of analysis and judgement required in Level 3 assessment.

Individual Questions

Activity 1

The research methods used in the source material were generally identified and referred to by learners within their work. However, many learners failed to access marks by referring to only one method of research used in the source material when they could have discussed and critiqued 2 more (focus groups, collaborative narratives).

The reviews of secondary data, where presented, were largely well informed and allowed learners to demonstrate their understanding of these methods very well. Reference to reliability and validity was not always included and this impacted on the opportunity to access marks. The critique of the source material was sometimes very well done, although the level of understanding demonstrated varied greatly across the work presented. Some learners failed to discuss the research methods included in both the source material and in research that they had sourced themselves, thus limiting their responses for this activity.

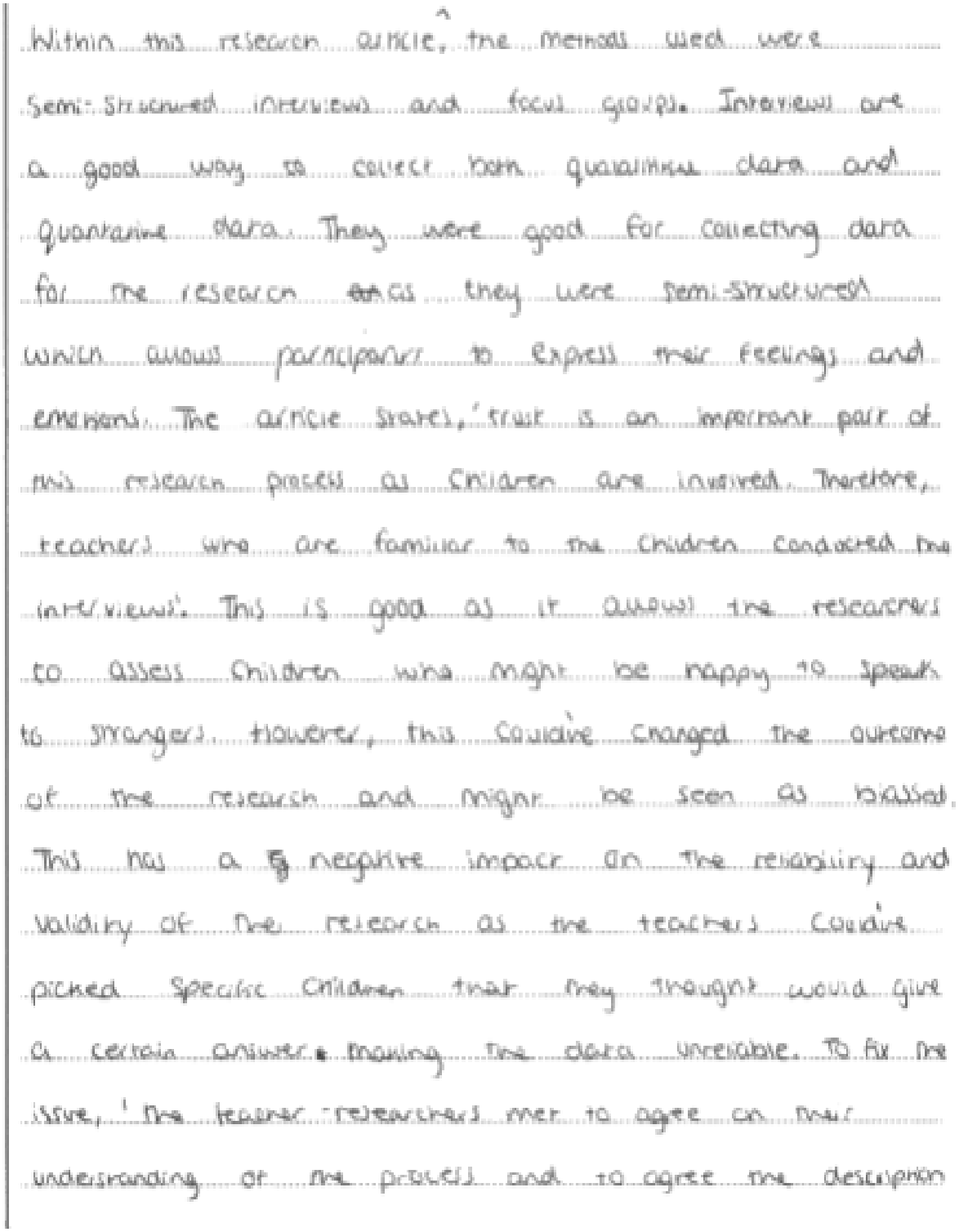
The source material included data collected from a range of methods, and stronger responses were presented by learners who were able to comment on this and include reference to opportunities to triangulate the data, for example. They were able to link this to the validity and reliability of the data contained in the source material.

Those learners making clear and well linked reference to research papers and articles that they had sourced themselves were able to provide comparisons and conclusions about the methods used in these papers. Those who accessed the higher mark bands were able to compare the research methods used in the research that they had sourced with those used in the source material and draw relevant and supported conclusions.

Weaker responses made limited reference to the source material or made no reference to additional material sourced by the learner. Some weaker learners referred to histograms, pie charts and other presentation methods as research methods. Reference to other methods used to investigate this issue, and comments on reliability and validity were often not included. Where these were presented, work was superficial and not supported.

Activity 1

The work shown below demonstrates a comprehensive approach to this question.



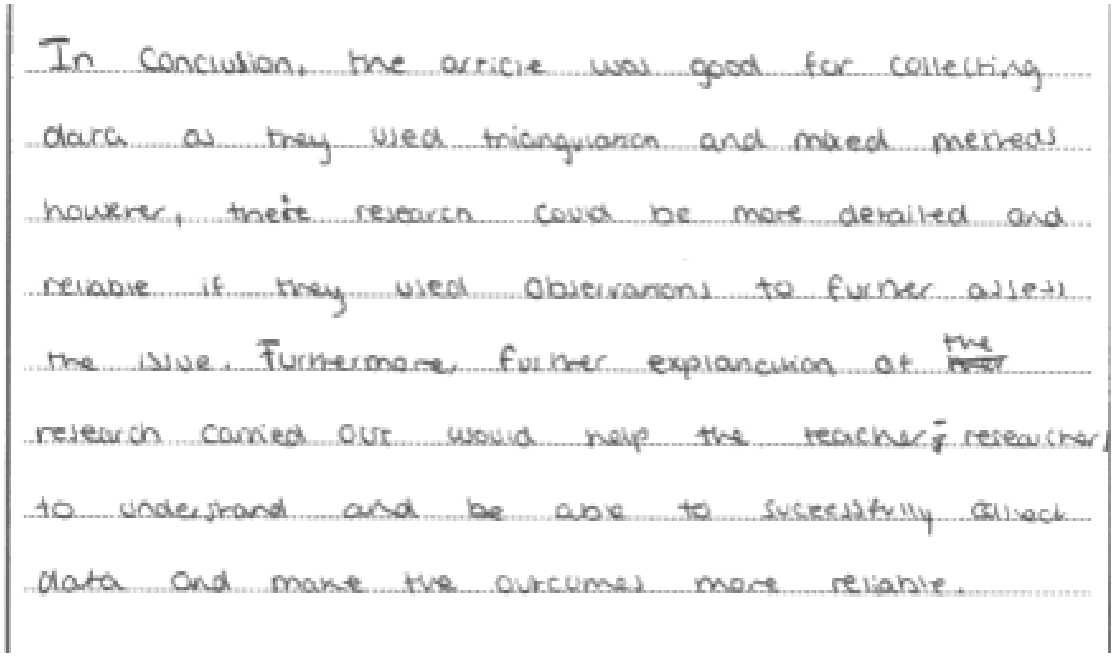
Within this research article, the methods used were semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Interviews are a good way to collect both qualitative data and quantative data. They were good for collecting data for the research as they were semi-structured which allows participants to express their feelings and emotions. The article states, 'trust is an important part of this research process as children are involved. Therefore, teachers who are familiar to the children conducted the interviews'. This is good as it allows the researchers to assess children who might be happy to speak to strangers. However, this could've changed the outcome of the research and might be seen as biased. This has a negative impact on the reliability and validity of the research as the teachers could've picked specific children that they thought would give a certain answer, making the data unreliable. To fix the issue, the teacher researchers met to agree on their understanding of the process and to agree the description

of the types of play', although the teachers met to discuss how they would collect data, 'only 7 sets of data were analysed for these findings' out of the total 12 settings. This shows alot of settings didnt understand the collection of the data and therefore shows concerns of unreliability.

On the other hand, the article uses triangulation within their research by using interviews, focus groups and different researchers such as University researchers and Nursery Group Coordinators. This is reliable as the research consists of mixed methods and a broader perspective. In relation to this, my Secondary research written in 2001 by Wilson and Hayland also used triangulation when conducting their research by using classroom observations, interviews and contact with School's administrators. Observations are good as they allow the researcher to gain indepth, detailed data about the participant. However, participants may feel uncomfortable with being observed which may effect their performance. As shared by my Secondary research, 'Compeing factors were not controlled for, such as Children's relationship with their teachers, families, and the Hawthorne effect, and these cannot be ruled out as possible influences on the Children's responses'. This shows that there couldn't been a potential breach in reliability and validity of the

researcher cannot be sure the data collected was true and reliable. Linking back to the article, both researches have potential signs of unreliability.

Focus groups are good as they allow researchers to focus on a specific group of people. This makes the data collected detailed and reliable as the research is structured and aimed towards a specific group. ~~In comparison~~ however, focussing on a specific group of people can be negative as it blocks the thoughts and opinions of people outside of the group which could impact the outcome of the research. In comparison to the article, my secondary research written in 2017 by CEEDA used Surveys to collect data. Surveys are good as they ~~were~~ can allow participants to express feelings which makes data qualitative and quantative however, Surveys can be very structured and participants might not feel comfortable answering and therefore there is a lack of responses. Within my secondary research, it states, 'A total of 3616 returns were received giving a response rate of 31%'. This shows that less than half of the participants completed the survey questioning the reliability of the data collected as it could be opinionated and lack truth.


In Conclusion, the article was good for collecting data as they used triangulation and mixed methods however, their research could be more detailed and reliable if they used observations to further assist the issue. Furthermore, further explanation of the research carried out would help the teacher/ researcher to understand and be able to successfully attack data and make the outcomes more reliable.

The response above gained 14 marks

Activity 2

Responses should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the issues facing men working in childcare from a range of perspectives, including the children, parents, managers and men working in childcare themselves.

Learners should show that they can make links between the issue of men working in childcare and the impact that this may have on others, such as the children themselves as well as employers and parents. Some responses contained interesting and well explained additional sources of information that was well linked to the findings in the source material.

Stronger responses cited relevant and well researched secondary sources of research. They were then able to demonstrate the learner's understanding of a range of impacts relating to men working in childcare.

Weaker responses failed to make effective links between the research findings in the source material and the secondary research material source by the learner themselves. Sometimes although the materials cited were relevant there was little to demonstrate that the learner understood the links between the different research findings or their relevance to the key concepts. Where they were presented, the links were tenuous and unsupported.

Work for this activity gained marks across the range of the mark bands, although the majority of work achieved in mark bands 1 and 2 as learners were not able to show and understanding of this issue and provide appropriate information supported by research findings.

The example below shows a good understanding of the key issues.

One way these issues and conclusions in this study relate to my own secondary research about practice in early years setting is because the said secondary research, 'including men in early childhood education: insighths from one european expenence'; another jan peeters university of Ghent, Belgium also ~~highlights the~~ discusses the issue of men as carers. The experts agreed that measure, to involve fathers more in the care of young children would have insignificant effect if no male childcare workers were employed in day-care centres. As childcare professions, men could serve as role models for young fathers; as well as, creating a culture in which there is also a place for men.

Furthermore, ~~it~~ it show that women are overrepresented in early childhood workforce - in primary schools in the Netherlands 85% of the teachers are ~~of~~ women; in the UK it is 86% and in

Denmark 76%. According to Moss (2013) gendering is related to the childrens age: the younger the child, the higher the gendering. Women pursue male careers because they offer prestige, higher pay etc. Similar to that as role of fathers in the education is not yet valued by society. There are various visions, many ways of knowing that are ~~based on the~~ use of these by various people and all have emotional, cultural, ethical, and historical foundations and can, therefore, all be contested. Each seperate identity must continually be called into question and be made be visible through dialogue and debate philosphy can be found in Reggio Emilia approach, but also in other parts of Europe, such a Sheffields children centre where diversity is the norm, not the expectation.

on the other hand, recent research has focused on the difference between male and female teachers or peadagogues towards the behaviour of 'unruly boys' when watching unruly play of boys, male teachers can distinguish better between playing and aggression than their female colleagues. For it States, female

educators tend to see the unruly play more as agression, while their male colleagues are more tolerent towards typical boyish behaviour. The ideal child for a female teacher is mostly a girl, and masculinity in boys is too often seen as negative.
In addition men can be expected / forced into providing stereotyped role models: playing football, fixing electricity. Therefore, to avoid genderstereotyping, cameron (2006) calls for more critical reflection in early childhood services on men's roles and experiences. cameron, Moss and owen (1999) point out that a solution lies in ensuring the visibility of men and women, both as categories and in their infinit variety.

Similar to this one first article states 'it becomes clear that children do not choose activities by gender but by the person who is 'good' at that particulary activity.'
This is some what may be true as as children are still in their prime ~~and still too~~ area of development. Therefore, ~~they choose~~ they will ~~that to~~ automatical choose one person who is better at a certain

activity whether it is playing a football, dressing up etc. As it is it state that in nurseries where a teacher is 'good at something', that person is often left to do that activity, such as gardening. There This is not a right or wrong; ~~is~~ children just need to see both genders participating in all ~~need~~ kinds of activities.

Lastly, in my opinion men can bring different skills and qualities to the profession which could help to broaden the curriculm and enhance the quality of & the service. Having a male childcare worker is present is good for staff relationships and brings a healthy mix.

As well as research suggesting that men "do have different styles from women in many aspects of their work such as their use of language risk-acceptance / physical play and humor, as well as behaviour in staff meetings, input in policy discussions etc. Men are not better than women, but they are different and together men and women create each culture in which to raise a child".

As well as that gender stereotyping could be the biggest reason why alot of men have either never considered working with young childcare as a ~~viable~~ visable career option, or been put ~~off~~ off out of fear of being stereotyped or different. Even in 2020, ~~is~~ there is still an assumption among many that childcare is a women job'.

The response above gained 14 marks

Activity 3

Some learners were able to review and discuss the issue of men working in early years' s environments and its impact on children and others within the setting. They identified relevant points and discussed the impact of their ideas on practice in early years' settings. They were able to include references to the article and other research they have reviewed in relation to men working in childcare settings.

Another key area to be addressed in this Activity was that of Reflective Practice. Some learners were able to demonstrate and understanding of reflection and its impact on practice within early years settings referencing a range of issues including the impact on children, issues of stereotyping, job roles, social factors and negative or positive feedback from a range of people including parents, children and others in society.

Stronger work also included a range of implications for research in practice showing analysis of key points supported by the research findings. Stronger work also included sound recommendations for change and sustained links to wider research.

Weaker responses demonstrated a limited understanding of reflection to child-care practice or the impact of men working in childcare on a range of individuals as well as the professional environment. They were not able to identify relevant points from the source article, such as the importance of reflective practice, or make reference to appropriate additional or research information. Where conclusions were included these were not supported or justified.

The work below provides an example of a response that addresses key areas of the question.

The book 'School Based Research' (2013) defines reflexivity as 'an interactive process which takes into consideration the relationship between the teacher, the students and the learning concepts' (School based research, 2013). This implies that in future practice practitioners will continue to hold a mirror to their own practice and make improvements when needed without prompting.
In the given study it is stated they hold a mirror to their own values and beliefs, implying reflection on any individual bias they may have. This reflection within a reflexive discussion would help to create an effective learning environment by iradicating personal gendered bias.
It also implies that constant reflexivity is highly beneficial throughout the career of an Early Years Practioner

both to diminish the effect of the gender bias and to improve professional practice overall. In the study ~~Diversi~~ 'Gender Diversification in Early Years education' conducted 'Gender' we see that most settings had an absence of strategies to recruit male practioners and that male practitioners often only work in settings short term due to 51% considering leaving the sector due to a potential accusation of sexual abuse.

This study used many different data collection methods such as, case studies, setting visits, interviews, focus groups and observations in order to get a accurate picture of what it was like for men to work in settings.

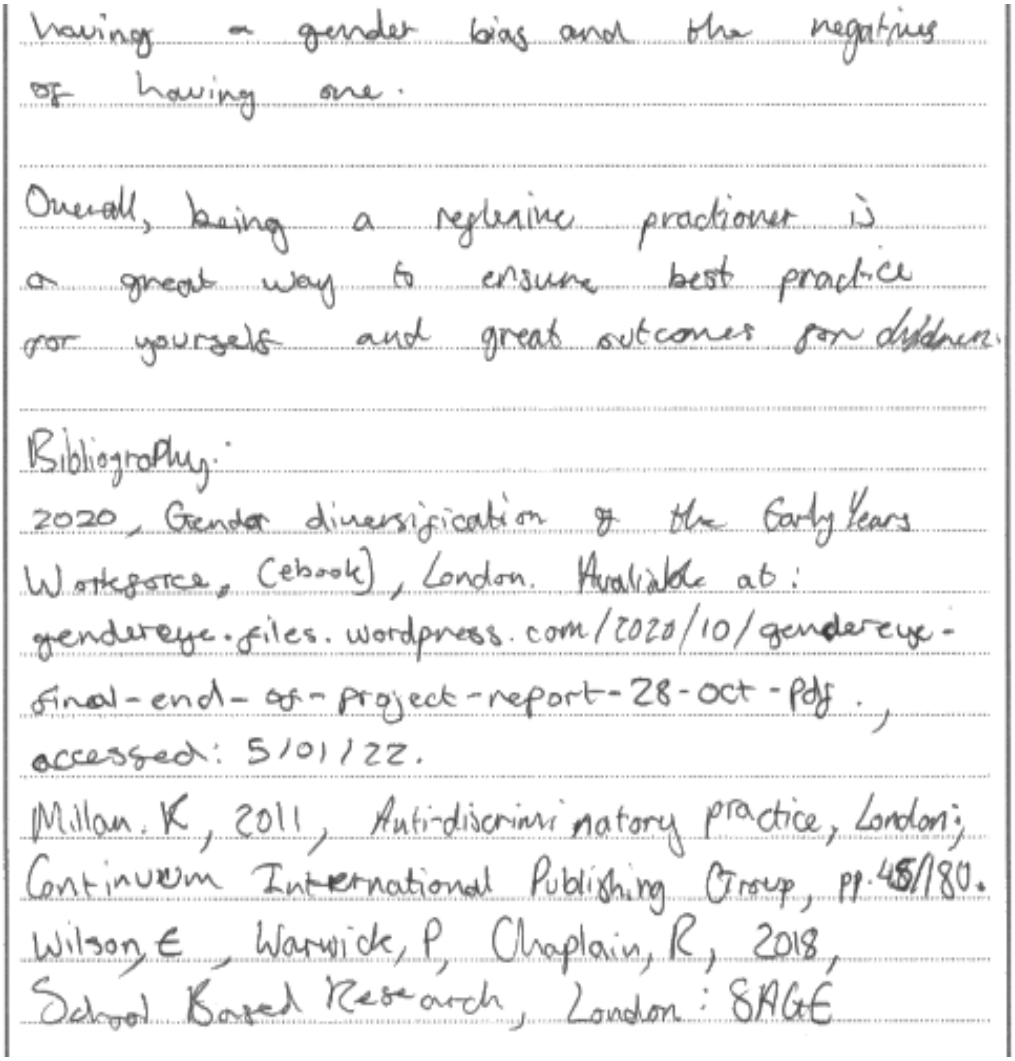
The findings as mentioned were that men did not have good support during the recruitment process or once they were employed. They were also delegated more physical tasks

The idea of reflexivity links the staff, the students and the content, therefore if we find that staff are not able to support one another, the following steps of students and the environment risk being neglected. Both of these studies showed that practitioners themselves were able to reflect on their practice and make improvements. The aspect on being reflexive is pertained by the first study as the lack of support for male practitioners in the second study showed a lack of reflexive and partnership working.

In the given article it infers that in order to provide effective learning opportunities in future practice children must see both male and female practitioners completing the ranges of activities in order to not develop a gender bias. This included ensuring that not only the member of staff who is 'good' at an activity is the one who completes it.

The given research notes that it was discussed in the focus group the reasons children chose each teacher. By acknowledging the reasons for each choice practitioners are able to make positive changes to their methods and environments.

The book 'Anti-Discriminatory Practice' (2011) states 'If children are told their are boys toys and girls toys it can influence their attitudes they have towards them and how they may play with them' by removing the gender bias of toys through representation of both male and female practioners practice evolves into a better version of itself. This statement also helps to show when a member of staff has a gender bias. Providing only certain toys to certain children due to their gender is discriminatory and needs to be identified and fixed. It is effective practice to try to ensure children do not develop any gender bias we can do this in setting and also providing information for parents regarding the positives of not



having a gender bias and the negatives of having one.

Overall, being a reflexive practioner is a great way to ensure best practice for yourself and great outcomes for children.

Bibliography:

2020, Gender diversification of the Early Years Workforce, (ebook), London. Available at: gendereye.files.wordpress.com/2020/10/gendereye-final-end-of-project-report-28-oct-pdf., accessed: 5/01/22.

Milan. K, 2011, Anti-discriminatory practice, London; Continuum International Publishing Group, pp. 45/180.

Wilson, E, Warwick, P, Chaplain, R, 2018, School Based Research, London: SAGE

The response above gained 18 marks.

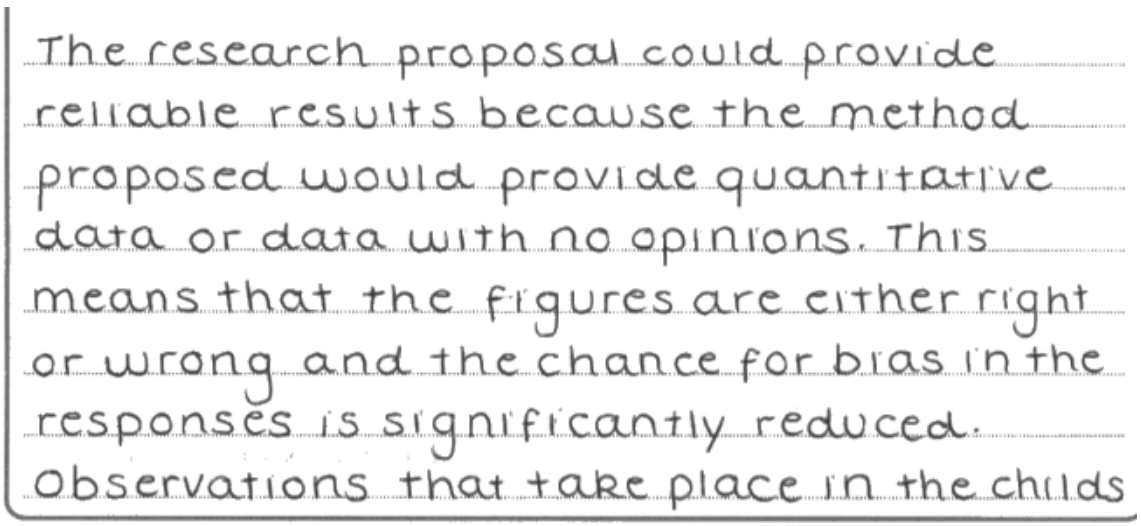
Activity 4

Work across all mark bands was presented for this activity. Work that attained marks within the higher mark bands showed a sound understanding of the full range of essential aspects of research processes, including reliability, validity, sample size and implementation practices.

Learners were able to critique the suggested research plan and suggest ways in which it could be improved, such as increasing the number of settings to be included in the study. Stronger responses included reference to validity and reliability as well as improvements that would help the researchers to address all areas of the research objectives. These suggestions for change were appropriate and well supported and links to the case study were evident throughout the work.

Work accessing marks within mark bands 1 and 2 was less comprehensive, often missing key areas such as reliability, confidentiality, validity and suggested improvements in research practice. There was often little or no reference to the case study, the responses were vey generic and lacked clear and relevant links to the case study provided. Centres should take not that generic responses are unlikely to allow access to higher marks for this Activity.

The example below provides an example of work which demonstrates a comprehensive approach to the question, including an understanding of research processes and how these can be effectively implemented within research practice relevant to the case study presented.


The research proposal could provide reliable results because the method proposed would provide quantitative data or data with no opinions. This means that the figures are either right or wrong and the chance for bias in the responses is significantly reduced. Observations that take place in the childs

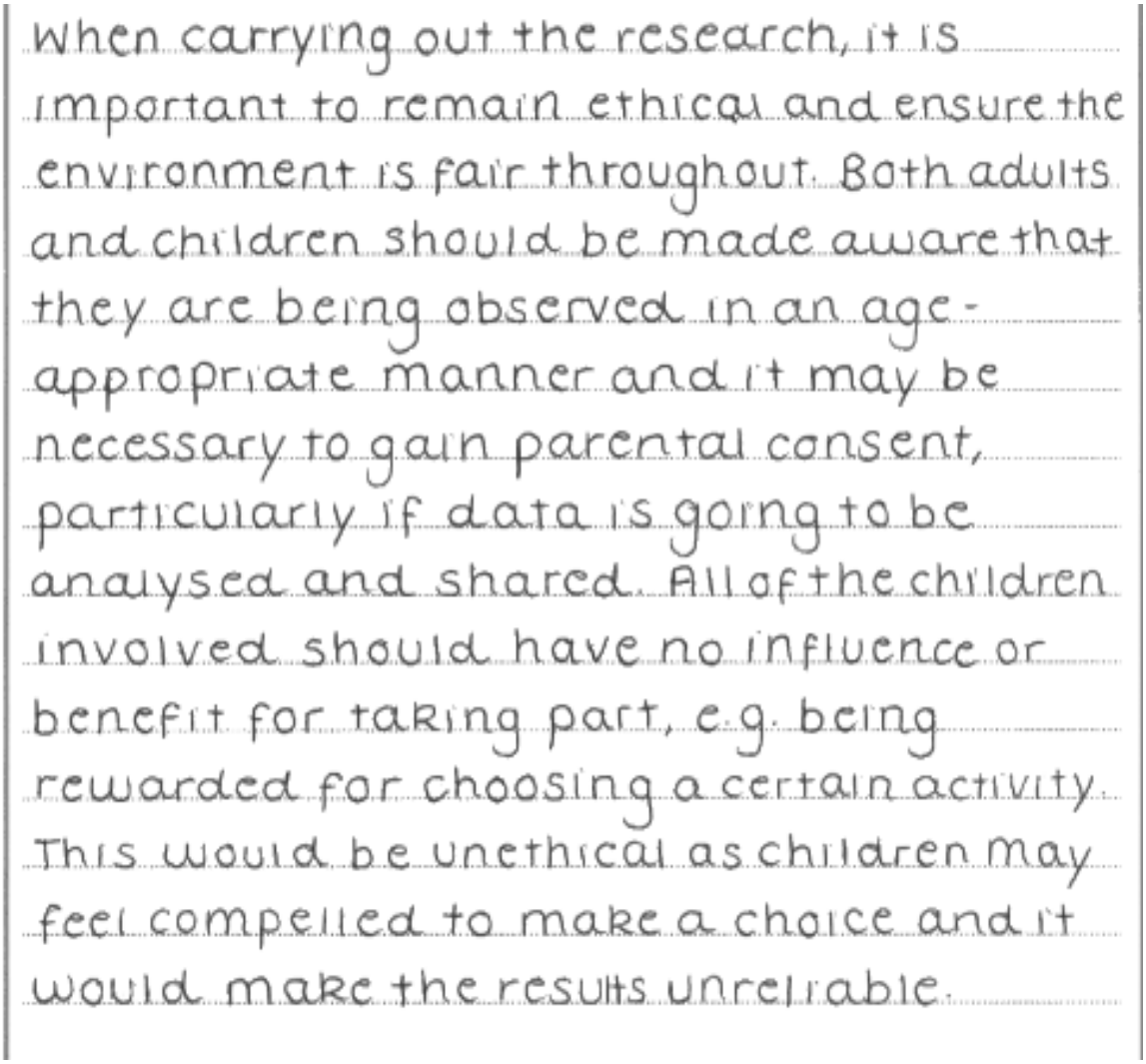
usual early years setting, an environment that they are familiar with, are also more reliable as the children behave normally and are exposed to the same influences. This can also be applied to the impact of the people involved in the observation - as the observer is a practitioner at the setting, children won't feel nervous or apprehensive. observations are an effective method of investigating a childs true and natural perceptions and behaviours. In this case the observations will be used to identify if children seek help from a practitioner based on their skills or their gender. In my secondary research, "Perceptions of gender roles : a case study" (Kambouri - Danos and Evans, 2019) observations were successfully used to identify a childs ability to be gender flexible in their play. Children were observed in a dress up game and it was recorded that only girls dressed up as characters from the opposite gender, helping researchers reach the conclusion that girls are more gender flexible and

perhaps more flexible male role models are needed in Early years provision.

Due to the aim of the research, it would be necessary to only observe in nurseries where there is at least one male practitioner. A repeated statistic that I found in my secondary research is that male educators currently hold only 2% of the early years workforce. This small percentage may limit any further research to a small sample size. Although the research aims to explore childrens choices, it could be beneficial to the results and conclusions because the more settings that take part, the more activities and skills that will be on offer to the children and the more data that can be collected. When research studies collect vast amounts of data, their conclusions can be considered more reliable.

I believe that a current weakness of this proposal is the limited methods planned to be used. The observation

method alone limits the amount of opinions and open ended data that could be collected. Currently, the proposal would reach a conclusion about the number of children that chose a certain activity but wouldn't extend to include the reasons why ~~a~~ the child chose it. A reccommendation for change that I would give is for the researcher to consider a multi-method approach. The most effective method that I would suggest is interviews with the children at the time of the activity taking place. The practitioner who observes the children should ask simple questions such as "why did you choose this activity?" and "why do you like doing activities with this adult?", this would allow the researcher to explore whether children hold adults as role models and apreciate their skills and personality or whether they choose activities because they are appealing.



When carrying out the research, it is important to remain ethical and ensure the environment is fair throughout. Both adults and children should be made aware that they are being observed in an age-appropriate manner and it may be necessary to gain parental consent, particularly if data is going to be analysed and shared. All of the children involved should have no influence or benefit for taking part, e.g. being rewarded for choosing a certain activity. This would be unethical as children may feel compelled to make a choice and it would make the results unreliable.

The response above gained 13 marks.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, learners should:

- Be able to demonstrate a clear and comprehensive understanding of research methodology
- Be able to discuss specific research methods used in the source material (Part A) and in the research findings from their own research into the topic area
- Be able to evaluate research information and make comparisons between findings from a range of sources.
- Use their research findings to draw realistic conclusions about the topic area under discussion, in this case, men working in child-care.
- Be able to make links between research findings and the implications for early years practice, including reference to legislation and identified practices based on secondary research material
- Demonstrate an understanding of the links between research findings from investigations into early years practice and show how this relates to the implications in the wider society, with particular reference to the issues identified in the source material, in this case, men working in child-care.
- Use descriptions and make reference to specific situations to demonstrate a clear understanding of essential factors underpinning research practice, including validity, ethics and consent when discussing research opportunities and findings
- Be able to write effectively for a specific purpose to present ideas and in a logical way
- Be able to focus on specific points within the activity and write a response which demonstrating clear understanding

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